

Prevalence of Binge Drinking in Past 30 Days Among In-School Youth

Year	7th Graders	9th Graders	11th Graders
2001-02	2.9	13.4	26.2
2003-04	3.7	11.5	23.3
2005-06	4.6	11.5	21.4
2007-08	6.4	15.8	29.0

The California-specific student data [California Student Survey -CSS] indicates:

- The prevalence of binge drinking has grown steadily among middle school students, with around 3% of 7th graders in the 2001-02 school year having had at least one episode of binge drinking in the past 30 days, increasing to over 6% by the 2007-08 school year.
- Binge drinking among high school students—both among 9th and 11th grade students—seems to have recently increased fairly substantially (after a period of decrease).
- The prevalence of binge drinking increases as students transition from middle to high school.
- Over 6% of seventh graders, nearly 16% of 9th graders, and almost 30% of 11th graders reporting having engaged in at least one episode of binge drinking within the past 30 days. Indeed, by 11th grade, binge drinking is the predominant pattern of alcohol consumption—of those who report having consumed alcohol, most have done so in a bingeing episode.
- Currently, most researchers distinguish binge drinking differently for men and women. For males, bingeing means having consumed five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple hours; for females, bingeing means having consumed at least 4 drinks or more drinks of alcohol in a row in that time frame. The CSS applies the “5 or more” standard.
- Disapproval of alcohol use (1 or 2 drinks a day) is measured, although not for binge drinking. About two-thirds of 7th graders disapprove of peers drinking 1-2 drinks a day. In 11th grade 48% disapprove of peers having 1-2 drinks of alcohol a day.
- The percentages who rated frequent drinking (5+ drinks of alcohol once or twice a week) as posing great harm varied the least and was highest in the 9th grade at 51%, followed by 11th at 48% and then 7th at 46%.

- Seventh graders were also asked about monthly use of alcohol. Seventeen percent estimated that half or more of their peers drank alcohol at least once a month. The percentage estimating 50% or more provides a benchmark for perceived "normalcy" of use. Perception, rather than objective reality, is the basis for social norms. As in past Student Survey results, this perception exceeds reported alcohol use by a substantial margin.
- Statistics on alcohol consumption are not available for drop outs (includes those enrolled in alternative education programs designed to reconnect them with schools to complete their secondary education, as well as dropouts who are unaffiliated with any type of program setting). However, past research shows that dropouts are markedly more involved in the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs than their in-school peers.

Other Alcohol-related Problems Among Youth

- The number of students who drink and drive, as well as those being driven by a friend who had been drinking, has risen steadily since 2003. 2007-08 CSS data indicate that:
 - 40% of 7th graders report having ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.
 - 23% of 9th graders, and 32% of 11th graders report having ridden in a car by a friend who had been drinking, or having driven a car when s/he themselves had been drinking alcohol.
- There were 1,570 juvenile misdemeanor DUI arrests in 2007, 1,621 in 2006, 1,380 in 2005, 1,403 in 2004 and 1,513 in 2003. [MACR]
- California Highway Patrol (CHP) statistics show that the number of youth 15 to 20 years of age (the only applicable age grouping provided) who were in fatal collisions after drinking and driving fluctuated in the five year period reported. There were 126 fatal collisions in 2003, 137 in 2004, 123 in 2005, 143 in 2006 and 120 in 2007.
- The following table shows deaths for youth ages 13-20 that are directly attributable to alcohol use. There appears to be an increase in 2007 in the number of deaths; however, due to the small total deaths per year this apparent increase may result from data fluctuations and not indicate a trend.

Alcohol Related Deaths in California
Youth Ages 13-20 years

Year	Acute ¹	Chronic ²	Total
2003	4	6	10
2004	3	7	10
2005	2	4	6
2006	2	8	10
2007	10	4	14

¹Acute conditions include alcohol poisoning, excessive blood level of alcohol, and suicide by and exposure to alcohol.

²Chronic conditions include alcohol abuse, alcohol dependence, alcohol psychosis, etc.

Source: California Department of Public Health, Death Statistical Master Files, 2003-2007.

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What causes underage drinking?

The following excerpt is from the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS):
<http://www.youthbingedinking.org/facts/problem.php>

Some teens are much more likely to drink alcohol than others. The prevalence of underage binge drinking within the state of California is similar to national trends: although many underage youth drink, the percentage that binge drink is small (i.e. approximately 25% of 11th graders binge monthly). However, given recent research on the effects of binge drinking on adolescent brain development, any binge drinking done by youth puts them at risk both for the present and the future.

Specific risk factors/attributes may make certain individuals more at risk for alcohol use and abuse than others. The factors that put teens at risk for alcohol use and abuse include the following:

Childhood behavior. Teens that were aggressive and antisocial, or impulsive, restless, and easily distracted as young children are more likely to have alcohol-related problems in their teenage years.

Mental or emotional problems. Teenagers that suffer from anxiety and depression disorders are much more likely to abuse or be dependent on alcohol. Problems with alcohol can sometimes lead to depression and anxiety, but, more frequently, teens with depression and anxiety disorders seek out alcohol and other drugs to avoid dealing with the pain caused by these illnesses. Teens with conduct disorders or certain types of attention-deficit disorders are also more likely to have problems with alcohol.

A family history of alcoholism. Children of alcoholics are much more likely than other teens to start drinking during their teenage years.

Positive parental attitudes toward drinking. Teens with parents who drink or express favorable attitudes toward drinking are more likely to start drinking sooner and to continue drinking. Teens that are warned about alcohol by their parents are less likely to start drinking.

Home environment. Teens that come from homes where parents provide little emotional support for their children, fail to monitor their activities, or have little involvement in their lives, are more likely to drink, and to drink heavily. Harsh, inconsistent discipline and hostility or rejection toward children have also been found to lead to adolescent drinking and alcohol-related problems.

Positive peer attitudes toward drinking. When a teen's friends drink, accept, or encourage drinking, the teen is more likely to drink.

Peer pressure begins early. One-third of 4th graders and more than half of 6th graders say they have been pressured by friends to drink alcohol.

Trauma. Adolescents in treatment for alcohol abuse or dependence report higher rates of physical abuse, sexual abuse, violent victimization, witnessing violence, and similar traumas than other teens.

Further examination is needed on how stress, anxiety, and depression interact during adolescence to influence the initiation of alcohol use.

Data Sources

1. The California Student Survey (CSS) is a biennial survey of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and other risk factors among California students in grades 7, 9, and 11.
2. California Department of Public Health, Death Statistical Master Files, 2003-2007.
3. Monthly Arrest and Citation Register (MACR) data is maintained by the California Office of the Attorney General, the main data depository of crime and law enforcement reports submitted by local law enforcement throughout the state.

4. California Highway Patrol (CHP), Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) -<http://www.chp.ca.gov/switrs/index.html>

5. Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS):
<http://www.youthbingedrink.org/facts/problem.php>